



JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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From Death to New Life: A Season of Hope

Editorial

The season of Easter may be long over but the Resurrection lives on in our lives. There is suffering and there is death and there is, in the end and always, a rising to new life. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "If Christ has not been raised, then our proc-

lamation has been in vain and your faith in vain." Christ has not just been raised, but is being raised. God brought life from death and the question is, will we be silent or part of that rising? Will we speak out against injustices in our own society? Will we work together for peace in our world? Christ's rising is going on in and around us. By working

together in solidarity we encourage hope and inspire courage in one another in that rising. (JCAN has lifted up some examples of hope in this issue with an article on maintaining Article 9 in Japan's Constitution, photos of rallies for peace, and interviews with individuals who inspire us with their commitment to human rights and peace.) The tomb is empty, the body gone, but we as the body of Christ move forward. May the power of the Spirit of the Resurrection of Life over Death empower us to work for justice and peace in our world today.



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Article 9 and Peace in Asia

By Rev. Toshi Yamamoto, General Secretary of NCCJ

Article 9 of the Japanese constitution says:

1) Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.

2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

1. Article 9 in Asia and the world

Japan as a nation forever renounced war as the Introduction of the Constitution clearly states. "We, the Japanese people resolve that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government" (Introduction of the Constitution)

Article 9 is a firm pledge to the people in Okinawa and Asia not to wage war and military invasion ever again. It is a commitment based on repentance for the aggression committed during the Asia Pacific war. Article 9 is a law that binds the government of Japan not to wage war under any circumstances.

GPACC, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, an initiative convened by the United Nations refers to Article 9 in the context of the challenges of arms reduction and demilitarization in North East Asia. "Japan should strictly abide by and preserve Article 9 of its Constitution. Any revision of this provision would form a threat to peace and stability in the region." (GPACC 2005) Peace loving people in the world expect Japan to keep Article 9.

2. U.S. Military Transformation and Militarization of Japan

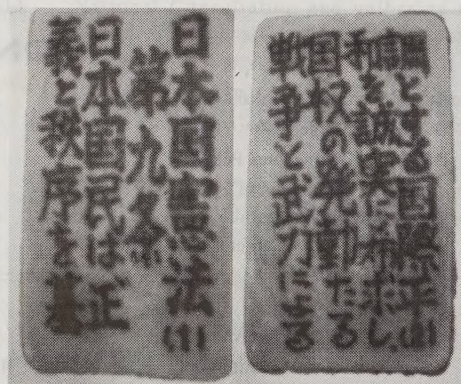
Japan is accelerating a process of radical change in its involvement in war. From being a country that collaborates and supports war, Japan is becoming a country that can wage war. This transformation is intimately connected to the global realignment of the U.S. defense strategy. The ongoing transformation and realignment of the U.S. military presence in the Asia Pacific region with the objective to consolidate the defense structure of the "Arc of instability" from East Europe, Middle East, India to East Asia is the greatest since the Korean War according to the Pentagon. The bilateral agreement reached in Tokyo in May 2006 further concretized this role of Japan. The transfer of the global headquarters of the First Army from Washington State to

Camp Zama near Tokyo, where the SDF (Self Defense Forces of Japan) will also establish the headquarters of a Ground SDF Central Readiness Force Command, indicates the perspective for the unification of the U.S. Forces in Japan and the SDF. Japan is heading towards full collaboration with the U.S. global war on terror also strengthening its missile defense system.

Legislation for "War Initiating Country"

The Abe administration took a step forward to change the Japanese constitution, aiming to remove Article 9, one of the biggest obstacles to accelerating the militarization of Japan. The military expenditure of Japan is equivalent to that of the US, Russia and China. It is clear that Japan would become a threat to peace and security in Asia and the Pacific if Article 9 were eliminated.

In recent years, as a part of consolidating efforts by the Japanese government, all the laws such as those on the *Hinomaru* ("national flag"), *Kimigayo* ("national anthem") and wire tapping, and emergency legislation were set in place. In addition to the Diet's passing of the amendment to the Fundamental Law on Education, which is centered around patriotic education, the Japanese government has been in the process of changing the constitution, particularly targeting Article 9. The Diet on May 14, 2007, passed into law a controversial national referendum bill for constitutional amendments. Furthermore, along with this move, Japan has been sending the SDF (Self Defense Force) to Iraq as an established reality in order to convince the Japanese people to support



Article 9 in Japanese printed on the slightly sweet rice crackers (osenbei). Includes on each cracker a sentence from Japan's Peace Constitution. Order from KOHAGIDOU (name of the osenbei store or osenbeiyasan) 980-0004 Sendai-shi Aoba-ku Miyamachi TEL/FAX: 022-222-3569. Please order by fax in Japanese.

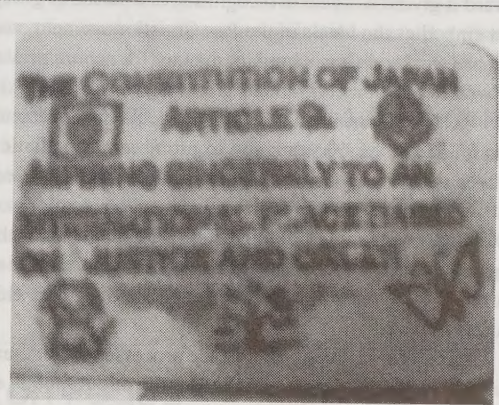
the change of the constitution and to become a "country" which could initiate and wage war.

4. Send us, God - for the realization of reconciliation and peace

This year marked the 62nd anniversary of the end of World War II and the defeat of the Japanese Empire. For people in East Asia whose lands were invaded, occupied or colonized by Japan, it was the 62nd anniversary of their liberation and independence. After Japan's defeat, many member churches and Christian organizations of NCC Japan confessed their sin of taking part in the war before God, repented, and asked forgiveness of God and their neighbors. We inscribed their past "memories of assaults" and what history had taught us in our memories, determined that we would never commit the same sin again, and started to walk a new path.

In the light of the above mentioned dangerous moves in Japan, we cannot remain as a passive spectator of this situation. The Bible says, "As God has sent me, so I send you." (John 20:21). And God sends the Holy Spirit as the defender and guides us to be reminded of what Jesus spoke to us. Jesus encourages us by saying, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to

you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27). We would like to be the ones to respond to this call and sending by God, saying, "Send us, God - for the realization of reconciliation and peace". We would like to follow up the work of the Gospel of reconciliation and peace that was done by Jesus throughout his life and participate in the work of God's mission. "Rise, let us be on our way." (John 14:31)



Article 9 osenbei is also available in English

Overcoming Violence

Dear Friends,

You can now download the brochure of the International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP) 2007 here:

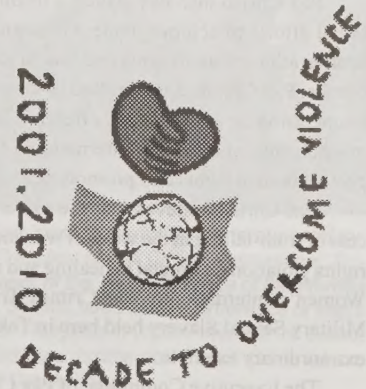
<http://overcomingviolence.org/en/about-the-dov/international-day-of-prayer-for-peace/resources.html>

Friday 21 September 2007

WCC member churches worldwide are once more invited to pray for peace on 21 September 2007 or the closest Sunday. The International Day of Prayer for Peace offers an opportunity for church communities in all places to pray and act together to nurture lasting peace in the hearts of people, their families, communities and societies. The idea was proposed in 2004 during a meeting between WCC general secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (press release), and coincides with the UN International Day of Peace. The Day of Prayer is one of the initiatives of the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence.

Congregations worldwide are invited to pray for peace - possibly using the same prayers - in all participating churches on September 21 or the Sunday preceding it.

Let us know if you will be taking part on this day by sending an email to Susan Lee at sle@wcc-coe.org.



Overcoming violence - Churches seeking Reconciliation and Peace. An occasional information letter from the DOV coordination office in Geneva, Switzerland DOV coordination office World Council of Churches P.O. Box 21001211 Geneva 2 Switzerland www.overcomingviolence.org

Pax Christi International Peace Award 2007

Women's Active Museum on War and Peace
Tokyo, Japan

(Editor's Note: this is a speech given on May 15, 2007, by Marie Dennis, Pax Christi International President and Maryknoll Office for Global concerns director, Washington, D.C. www.maryknollogc.org)

It is my sincere honour and pleasure to present the Pax Christi International Peace Award for the year 2007. This Award is given each year in recognition of a person or group that embodies the ideals of the Pax Christi movement, and that has worked in an exemplary manner for a more peaceful world.

Pax Christi, the international Catholic peace movement, was founded over 60 years ago to promote reconciliation between the French and the Germans at the end of the Second World War. Pax Christi has member organizations on five continents in over 50 countries, including Japan (the Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace is a Pax Christi partner), working for peace and reconciliation in a wide variety of ways.

Pax Christi is supporting peace processes in Southern Sudan, Northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has accompanied the reconciliation process in the former Yugoslavia as well as efforts for peace in Sri Lanka, the southern Philippines and Colombia and encourages local groups committed to non-violence in the Middle East.

Pax Christi also has played a leading role in international efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament, control the proliferation of small arms and ban landmines and cluster bombs. Pax Christi is committed to interfaith dialogue and cooperation in establishing effective international legal mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, to protect human rights and promote peace.

Pax Christi believes that the extremely difficult process of truth-telling in the wake of war and egregious human rights violations is crucial to healing and reconciliation. The Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery held here in Tokyo in 2000 was an extraordinary example.

The Executive Committee of Pax Christi International and the Cardinal Bernardus Alfrink Peace Fund, a Foundation established in honour of one of Pax Christi's first International Presidents and sponsor of the Peace Award, have decided to present the 2007 Award to the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace.

Women's Active Museum on War and Peace

Since its opening in the summer of 2005, marking the 60th year from the end of WWII and the 10th year from the Beijing Conference on Women, the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace has demonstrated its commitment

to retrieving the painful memories of wartime sexual violence and creating a setting in which the stories of "comfort" women who were victims and are survivors of that violence can be retold and healing can begin.

The museum has helped sustain international attention on the process and findings of the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal, which made sexual slavery a symbol of wartime violence against women and gave women around the world, especially those caught in the violence and tragic aftermath of war, new hope. The proceedings of the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal, and its ruling that the Japanese military sexual slavery system was a war crime according to international laws then in force, made a tremendous contribution to exposing the gendered nature of war crimes and to ending the impunity with which wartime sexual violence has been committed against women around the world.

In a recent interview in *Japanesia Review*, the renowned president of the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace, Nishino Rumiko, described this extraordinary project as an action for Japanese society to regain its memory and to change citizens' attitudes and perceptions towards the issues related to war. The museum, she said, is built on the "hope and conscience of the current Japanese society." Already, it has become a center for women activists aiming to stop war, eliminate all forms of violence in war and conflicts, ensure the protection of women's human rights and contribute to reconciliation in the Asia/Pacific region.

The work of the Museum seems particularly important at this time when the historical memory of the Japanese people is threatened by a conservative ideology with growing political power.

For decades, Pax Christi International has celebrated the leadership of Japan in forging an "international peace based on justice and order." The Women's Active Museum on War and Peace is an excellent example of Japanese leadership on behalf of peace based on justice for women.

The fact that the Japanese Constitution (Article 9) "renounced war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat to use force as a means of settling international disputes" gave hope to people around the world who work for the non-violent resolution of conflicts.

Japan's Three Principles on Arms Export and Three Non-Nuclear Principles, both based on Article 9, made that hope explicit. The fact that Japan has actively sought to reduce the global trade in weapons has given hope to people around the world suffering under the scourge of proliferat-

ing armaments. The fact that Japan, with its unique and painful experience of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, has prohibited the possession, production and introduction of nuclear weapons into Japanese territory, has given hope to all who are working to rid the world of the scourge of nuclear weapons. The fact that Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution is in jeopardy greatly concerns Pax Christi. Few more powerful examples exist of a national commitment for peace.

On a personal note, I am deeply distressed that the government of my own country, the United States of America, has supported – even encouraged – the revision of Article 9. I apologize deeply for the pursuit of U.S. global military and economic interests at the expense of the Japanese people's vision of peace. The propensity of those with immense power to rewrite history to fit their own ideology is not limited to this part of the world. The absence of an historical memory that allows the U.S. government to intervene here in such an offensive manner adds even greater urgency to the work of this museum. That the United States, having

dropped atomic bombs on two of Japan's most beautiful cities, could help undercut the foundation of policies that prohibit the production or deployment of such weapons on Japanese territory is unthinkable.

Pax Christi International draws inspiration not only from the heroes and heroines of history, but more importantly, from contemporary heroes and heroines who are striving to create a culture of peace in their communities and in the world. It is these modern heroes who fill the world with hope, and strengthen the belief that a true and lasting peace for humankind is within collective reach. Pax Christi International is shocked and saddened by the killing of Mayor Itoh of Nagasaki. His commitment to disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, was well known to us.

Too often we fail... to honour and celebrate the important contributions to a more peaceful and just world of so many wonderful people and organizations around the world. Our award is an effort to do just that. I... present this 2007 Peace Award to the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace. May your efforts bear lasting fruit.

Conversation on Peace

Marie Dennis (Pax Christi) came to Japan to present an award to the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (see related JCAN article page 6.) She also visited the NCCJ office with Sr. Filo to meet general secretary, Rev. Toshi Yamamoto. Here are excerpts of their conversation.

Toshi: Is this your first visit to Japan?

Marie: Yes, it is. After Tokyo, I will be going with Sr. Filo to Hiroshima.

Sr. Filo: Please tell Marie more about Article 9.

Toshi: Article 9 has 70% of the Japanese support but with the upcoming elections in July, we have to elect politicians who support keeping Article 9 in the Constitution. Japan has extended their Self Defense Force in Iraq for two more years and now wants to call the SDF a military force which is dangerous. If there is a conflict or a war anywhere or one the U.S. is involved with, then Japan can easily join the war. Presently the Japanese troops are in a "non-combat" zone in Iraq, if you can say there is a non-combat zone in Iraq...

Marie: What is the Japanese response to U.S. pressure to become a global military and economic power?

Toshi: U.S. is very strong. Global strategy is to have a strong military partner in Asia which is Japan. Article 9



L-R: Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto, NCCJ general secretary; Marie Dennis, Co-President of Pax Christi International; Sister Filo Hirota, Superior of the Japan Province of the Women Religious in Japan. Sisters, head of the Conference of Major Superiors of Women Religious in Japan, member of Catholic Conference of Bishops Justice and Peace Commission, and NCCJ Article 9 Committee.

stands in the way of doing this. But there is a deep concern that Japan will become more militaristic....

Marie: What is the future of the relationship between China and Japan?

Toshi: As long as the Japanese Prime Minister goes to Yasukuni Shrine and the Japanese government sides with the U.S., the relationship won't improve. There are memories all over Asia of Japan as aggressor. The Japanese people

(Cont'd on p. 6, col. 1)

Conversation... (Continued from p. 5)

were both victims and perpetrators oppression. So somehow we need to settle these historical issues if we are to move on. Forgiveness doesn't happen without repentance. Japan has not repented. Japan may easily say, "I'm sorry" but doesn't mean it. "I'm sorry" (suimasen) is often used almost like a greeting here. But Japan needs to truly repent.

Marie: What role are Christian churches able to play?

Toshi: The Christian voice is small. Therefore, we work with other faiths. We work together with others to convey our voices to politicians and work for a wider network internationally. We are grateful for groups like Pax Christi and what you have initiated. Ecumenical -accompaniment is the key word. Ecumenical solidarity shows we really care. This is significant for faith-based communities....

Marie: Is there a significant ecumenical/interfaith community sharing concerns?

Toshi: There is the Christian Peace Network and the Interfaith Peace Network which includes Buddhists and others concerned for peace. Also the Article 9 Association is interfaith. We hope Pax Christi will send a participant for the Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 Conference this November in Japan. Let us continue to work together for peace.

Pax Christi International has elected Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo and Marie Dennis as the new Presidents of Pax Christi International at their Annual General Assembly taking place 28 April 2007 in Antwerp, Belgium. Their 3 years mandate as co-presidents begins at the Triennial World Assembly of Pax Christi International, which will take place from 30 October to 4 November 2007 in Torhout/Bruges. The present International President, H.B. Michel Sabbah, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, will remain in office until 3 November 2007.

To learn more about Pax Christi, the Catholic Peace Movement, see <http://www.paxchristi.net/>

Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution

Article 9 and Peace in Asia
November 29 -December 1, 2007 , Tokyo, Japan
Korean YMCA, tokyo, Japan

Concept and Rationale

Article 9

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2. U.S. Military Transformation and Militarization of Japan

Japan is accelerating a process of radical change in its involvement in war. From being a country that collaborates and supports war, Japan is becoming a country that can wage war. This transformation is intimately connected to the global realignment of the U.S. defense strategy. The ongoing transformation and realignment of the U.S. military presence in the Asia Pacific region with the objective to consolidate the defense structure of the Arc of instability from East Europe, Middle East, India to East Asia is the greatest since the Korean War according to the Pentagon. The bilateral agreement reached in Tokyo in May 2006 further concretized this role of Japan. The transfer of the global

(Cont'd on p. 7, col.1)

Asia Inter-religious... (Continued from p. 6)

headquarters of the First Army from Washington State to Camp Zama near Tokyo, where the SDF (Self Defense Forces of Japan) will also establish the headquarters of a Ground SDF Central Readiness Force Command, indicates the perspective for the unification of the U.S. Forces in Japan and the SDF. Japan is heading towards full collaboration with the U.S. global war on terror also strengthening its missile defense system.

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In recent years, as a part of consolidating efforts by the Japanese government, all the laws such as those on the Hinomaru ("national flag"), Kimigayo ("national anthem") and wire tapping, and emergency legislation were set in place. In addition to the Diet's passing of the amendment to the Fundamental Law on Education, which is centered around patriotic education, the Japanese government has been in the process of changing the constitution, particularly targeting Article 9. The Diet on May 14, 2007, passed into law a controversial national referendum bill for constitutional amendments. Furthermore, along with this move, Japan is sending the SDF (Self Defense Force) to Iraq as an established reality in order to convince the Japanese people to support the change of the constitution and to become a "country" which could initiate and wage war.

Article 9 conference for Peace loving religious community

In the light of these dangerous moves in Japan, we cannot remain as a passive spectator of this situation. We, the religious community, will affirm the realization of peace by nonviolence and will act on the basis of our faith. We will further tackle the urgent tasks of keeping and putting life into Article 9 together with people throughout the world. We now send a message on Article 9 of Japan's Peace Constitution to all people in Asia and the world in order to promote "Peace and Nonviolence" and this call to hold an "Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9".

Participants:

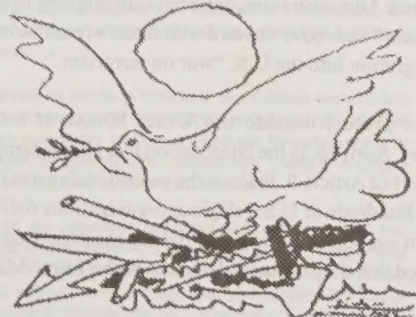
About 50 participants from various churches and ecumenical organizations in Asia as well as from other areas in the world are invited. Participants will be selected to ensure

that voices from different religions and regions will be included.

Venue: Korean YMCA Hotel in Suidobashi, Tokyo, Japan
Duration: November 29 -December 1, 2007 (arrival Nov 28, departure Dec 2)

Portions of the conference will be open to the public. On Thursday, Nov. 29 at 10:50 a.m. there will be a keynote presentation by Ms. Takako Doi, (Former Chief of Social Democratic Party in Japan). On Friday morning from 9:15, there will be panel discussions on the **Praxis of Non-Violence and Peace**. On Friday afternoon a panel discussion on Article 9 and the **Militarized World**. On Friday evening, from 7-9 p.m., a peace concert with singers Rattlesnake Annie and Noriko Shintani.

Call NCCJ 03-3203-0372 or Email NCCJ for more information. (Please note: this is a new email for NCCJ) general@ncc-j.org



"Friendships for Growth, Finding Spiritual Direction" Women's Retreat 2008 January 25, 26, 27 at Amagi Sanzo, Izu, Japan

This year's speaker is Rev. Jeannette A. Bakke, Ph.D., D.Min. author of *Holy Invitations: Exploring Spiritual Direction*, Baker Books 2000, is a consultant in Spiritual Formation and Spiritual Direction, retreat leader and spiritual director. She is a graduate of Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, Washington, D.C., and teaches a course in Spiritual Direction at Bethany Seminary. This retreat will include worship, teaching, quiet spaces for individual reflection and opportunities for small and large group sharing.

For more information email Rev. Linda Schmidt, co-pastor at Yokohama Union Church, at yuc@church.email.ne.jp

U.S. Religious Community to Japanese Prime Minister: Keep Article 9!

April 26, 2007

Leaders in campaign to save the Japanese Constitution's peace clause protest outside the White House during Prime Minister Abe's visit

As Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe dined with President Bush at the White House Thursday, U.S. religious leaders, in support of broad sectors of the religious community and civil society groups in Japan, protested outside in hopes of saving Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. Article 9, the aptly named "peace clause" of Japan's 1946 constitution, states that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes." Prime Minister Abe, with the support and encouragement of the Bush Administration, has been campaigning to eliminate Article 9 and move forward with Japan's remilitarization and integration into the U.S. "war on terrorism."

The protest outside the White House at 6:00pm Thursday, April 26, is the latest action in a global campaign in support of Article 9. Prior to the protest, delegates representing hundreds of U.S. religious organizations delivered letters in support of Article 9 to the Japanese embassy and requested that they be hand-delivered to the Prime Minister.

"We uphold Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan as a unique and powerful contribution to international peace and security," states the organizational sign-on letter circulated by the campaign prior to the Prime Minister's visit. "The prospect of its elimination not only greatly saddens us, but also makes us fear for regional stability and harmony."

In recent months, the Bush Administration has made clear its hope for Japan to alter its Constitution to allow its military to be integrated into the U.S. security strategy in

the Asia-Pacific region. But religious leaders in Japan, including the Japanese Catholic Bishops' Conference, have clearly stated that policy decisions made by Japan will likely have profound reverberations throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

"Japan already has one of the largest military budgets in the world, and without constitutional limits, Japan could pose a serious threat to neighboring Asian countries," said the Most Reverend Joseph M. Takami, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Nagasaki. "A new arms race could emerge. In fact, last fall, a ranking Japanese political figure even suggested that Japan should consider possessing nuclear weapons." U.S. religious leaders echo the sentiments of their counterparts across the Pacific.

"Article 9 provides a more effective and true path to peace and stability in the region than force of arms ever could," stated Bishop Gabino Zavala, auxiliary bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles and bishop president of Pax Christi USA. "By renouncing war and aggressive use of military force, Japan has become a cornerstone for regional security. In the sixty years since the end of World War II, not a single person has died as a result of Japanese state aggression."

Columban Father Frank Carroll, who recently returned from ministering and living 43 years in Japan, emphasized that "although the Japanese government is attempting to restrict public debate on the deletion of Article 9 and is fast-tracking legislation to eliminate it, the populace fiercely regard this peace clause of their constitution as a 'treasure' and an essential contribution to world peace."

As nations struggle in this current climate to find ways to coexist peacefully, Archbishop Takami notes the unique contribution that Article 9 offers. "If there was ever a time when alternatives to war are needed, as we most notably see in the downward spiral that violence has wrought in Iraq, it is now."

For more information on the campaign to save Article 9, go to www.paxchristiusa.org.

For media interviews or more information, contact: Theresa Polk, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office of the Columban Missionaries/USA, 410-652-1699 or tpolk@columban.org. Johnny Zokovitch, communications director at Pax Christi USA, 352-219-8419 or johnnypcusa@yahoo.com





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Rev. M. K. J. P. P. P.
 President

Rev. Y. K. J. P. P. P.
 General Secretary

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
 c/o The Embassy of Japan
 2025 Massachusetts Ave NW
 Washington, DC 20008
 April 26, 2007

Dear Prime Minister Abe:

We write as faith-based organizations with deep concern over proposed changes to Japan's constitution. Called by our various faith traditions to be peace-makers and renounce violence as a means of resolving conflict, we uphold Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan as a unique and powerful contribution to international peace and security. The prospect of its elimination not only greatly saddens us, but also makes us fear for regional stability and harmony.

We recognize that pressure is mounting from the US Administration for Japan to alter its Constitution to allow its military to be integrated into the US security strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. However, as citizens and people of faith, we believe that Article 9 provides a more effective and true path to peace and stability in the region than force of arms ever could. By renouncing war and aggressive use of military force, Japan has become a cornerstone for regional security. In the sixty years since the end of World War II, not a single person has died as a result of Japanese state aggression. If only the United States could claim such a record.

Furthermore, policy decisions made by Japan are not and cannot be made in isolation, but instead reverberate throughout the region and beyond. Japan, already perceived as an economic and military powerhouse, will find itself to be in the vortex of a shifting and suddenly more volatile world, as neighbors and even allies are forced to react to a resurgent Japanese military force. With Japan's military no longer constitutionally constrained, there is a strong possibility that a regional arms race will ensue, as neighboring countries look to their own defenses.

Popular opinion in Japan does not support this change. Nor do our Japanese congregations and partners, our brothers and sisters in faith. Article 9 has become a source of pride and identity - an alternative path to peace and prosperity in a chaotic and dangerous world. We stand in solidarity with the people of Japan, as well as with those who live in militarized communities and under the threat of violence everywhere, and ask that you respect the integrity and commitment of Japan's Peace Constitution and maintain Article 9. We will call on our country to do the same.

Sincerely,
 Reverend Dr. Robert Edgar
 General Secretary
 National Council of Churches USA

Bishop Gabino Zavala
 Bishop President
 Pax Christi USA
 Auxiliary Bishop
 Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles

David Robinson
 Executive Director
 Pax Christi USA

Rabbi Arthur Waskow
 The Shalom Center

Rev. Cally Rogers-Witte
 Rev. David Vargas
 Co-Executives of
 Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and
 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Prioress Dorothy Jean Beyer, OSB
 Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel

(JCAN Editor's Note: There were also 39 Catholic and Protestant organizational endorsements.)

Religious Leaders Summit in Cologne, Germany

From June 5-June 7, NCCJ General Secretary, Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto attended a Religious Leaders Summit in Cologne, Germany. During this time the heads of G8 countries were meeting in Heiligendamm, Germany and in order for the voice of the religious communities to be heard, the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany invited leaders from religious communities to a Religious Leaders Conference. Participants came primarily from G8 countries representing diverse Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and other religious traditions and communities.

The conference was held in proximity to the proceedings of the German Kirchentag (which is the National Church Assembly for all the Protestant Churches held once every two years.) The conference was invitation-only and there were 59 people who attended including two unrelated participants from Japan: the NCCJ general secretary, Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto and Rt. Rev. Yoshinobu Miyake, general director, Konko Church of Izu (Shinto). Others who attend were Archbishop (em). Desmond Tutu, Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches and Co-President WCRP, Rev. Mvume Dandala, general secretary of the Nairobi-based All Africa Conference of Churches,

and various other religious leaders (e.g the president of the Islamic Relief Worldwide, the general secretary of the Hindu Council, the Chief Rabbi of Russia, and representatives of other indigenous religions). The Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu joined the other religious leaders and globalization critics in sending an anti-poverty message to the leaders of the Group of Eight industrial nations who were also meeting in Germany. On the final day of the Religious Leaders Summit, all the participants attended the open-air worship at Kirchentag. Kirchentag this year was a huge gathering and had over 400,000 people were in attendance; it is by far the largest Protestant gathering held in Germany. German Chancellor Angela Merkel also spoke at Kirchentag. Archbishop Tutu said in his talk during Kirchentag, "We can survive only together, we can be free only together, we can be prosperous only together, we can be human only together."

The imbalance between developed countries and the developing world and resultant conflicts continue to negatively impact the lives of the majority of the world's population. Just Participation is a term Christian communities and other religious communities have adapted to voice concern over the growing gap between the rich and the poor. The conference discussed strategies to combating poverty. The statement included issues such as: rethinking controversial economic models, strengthening Africa's position in international relations, enhancing peace and security, honoring past G8 promises for poverty eradication, official development aid, debt cancellation, international trade, moving towards a new framework on climate change. The statement which was adopted will be forwarded to the G8 heads of government calling for "a concrete, discernable life-giving and life-sustaining progresses in the lives of our sisters and brothers and our planet." The Religious Leaders Summit plans to meet again in Japan in 2008.



In God's Image

We invite all JCAN readers to subscribe to *In God's Image*, an Asian women's theological journal. *In God's Image* provides a forum for expressing Asian women's reality, struggles, faith reflections and aspirations for change. *In God's Image* is published four times a year by Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology. It is an organisation of women and women's organisations in Asia who are engaged in promoting Asian women's theology. Dr. Hisako Kinukawa represents Japan as one of the Coordinating Team Members on the executive committee.

AWRC also publishes a newsletter called WomenNet and various books on Asian women's theology.

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Working for Justice, Peace, and Human Rights: Ms. Fumiko Oshima

(Alison and Claudia, JCAN Editors, interview Fumiko on May 18, 2007)

The new Executive Secretary of the Women's Committee of NCCJ, Fumiko Oshima comes from a long line of activists in Japanese Christianity. Her grandfather was Koichi Oshima, who was the chair of the NCCJ Committee on the Yasukuni Shrine for many years, while her grandmother Shizuko Oshima was one of the founders of HELP (an Asian Women's shelter in Tokyo – see last issue of JCAN #740 for an article on HELP). Her mother, a human rights lawyer who studied at Rikkyo must have been a great influence on Fumiko, who already with an interest in justice, like her mother studied law. Having worked part-time for NCCJ with the responsibility for the Women's desk, she now works full-time, with the additional responsibility for the 'Disabled' Person's Committee and the Philippines Committee. Three big jobs for one person, and we were very grateful to her for talking to us.

Her main job is with the Women's committee, where she is the executive secretary. Asking her what sort of duties this involved, she enthusiastically told us of her favourite duty, that of organising of the 'World Day of Prayer' activities in Japan. As it occurs in March, its freshness was still in her memory. Every year the church women of one country prepare the liturgy for this international celebration. This year the liturgy was prepared by the women of the Paraguayan Churches and we are shown the beautiful picture of lace that was used as an evocative symbol for the occasion.

Another duty is to network with the women of other Christian groups through the Christian Women's Network. This she does mainly through internet and email. She also writes a twice yearly newsletter. The group of women that form the women's Committee comprises of women from many denominations, including Free Methodist, Catholic, Salvation Army and Baptists, as well as Christian organisations such as Kyofukai and YMCA. She reflects that the women's committee is actually more ecumenical than NCC.

Another big task is in working for the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence. In doing this she has been organising forums on various topics including the latest which was on the Yasukuni Shrine. As women's desk, her international work is limited to Korea. NCC Korea and Japan have been working together to organize yearly conference. Last year, the conference was in Japan on the subject of Japanese military sexual slavery, also known as the comfort woman issue.

And so along with all this she has just started her new duty to work with the church in helping to raise conscious-

ness of its treatment of disabled people. Oshima-san points out that the Japanese churches are not leading the way in this area, but are in fact behind the rest of society. When asked to elucidate, she points out that for many people using wheel chairs,

there were access problems, and no toilet facilities, while blind or deaf people were not offered braille or signing help. Her duty here is less in raising awareness in society but rather within the churches themselves.

With her third area being the Philippines, she certainly has a full desk. With recent human rights abuses and the killing of many church workers, the NCCP is going through a dark time. Fumiko's focus is to see what Japan can do to help the Philippines. She mentions that one of the problems is that the Japanese government sends so much aid to the Philippines, but then tells the country what to do. This power tends not to be used in order to encourage the government to examine its human rights abuses, but rather to pressurise the Phillipino government to allow in Japanese companies.

Fumiko-san enjoys her work at NCCJ, but we wanted to know if she had any other interests. She paused to think then said that she really liked listening to opera – all kinds of opera. Although she claimed not to be a singer herself, we could imagine her voice in a choir of solidarity for human rights, justice and peace.

Thinking about voices singing for change we are reminded of these words of a hymn: "How can we keep from singing? ...through all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing; It finds an echo in my soul-how can I keep from singing?"*

With people like Fumiko working for peace, indeed how can we keep from singing?

(*part of the first verse of the hymn: "My Life Flows on in Endless Song")



Ms. Oshima is the Executive Secretary for the NCCJ women's Committee, "Disabled" Persons and the Church Committee

Working with Refugees and Migrant Workers, Debbie Presses On

Devorah Anne Umipig-Julian did not expect to end up in Japan. She thought Africa would be her home. And she was surprised to be assigned here. A Filipino woman going work in Japan is expected to be going as a 'japayuki', a term that describes the waves of Filipino women who come to Japan, looking to make a better standard of living for themselves and families back home. As a single woman then, that was how she might appear to others. She is still here after 6 years; it was clearly not a bad choice for her.

She came originally as a Methodist missionary to work with UCCJ (Nihon Kirisito Kyodan) and was assigned at the CJFF (Center for Japanese- Filipino Families). After 5 years of working with them, in December 2006, she started doing something different, working with Nankiren, which is how she and I ended up in a noisy cafe talking about her work, her home, family and life in Japan.

Nankiren has a long name which is the 'Christian Coalition for Refugee and Migrant Workers (CCRMW). (And an even longer Japanese name.) Before she arrived, it was a 'one woman team' with Naoko Sato as the fulltime worker. Realizing that they needed a social worker, they employed Devorah to help. The women work with a committee, of which they are a part, in implementing plans approved there. Her experience of this committee is a good one, they are 'active church leaders' who 'know what's going on'. And, she explains that she appreciates working in such an ecumenical environment; there are Anglican, Roman Catholic and United Church of Christ Japan (Kyodan) and United Methodist members.

One of the things that Nankiren have done and one of the things Debbie is enthusiastic in explaining is the work of the Ushiku Menkai Network. In April 2004, it became

clear that more needed to be done in terms of visiting the detention centers. A group was formed comprising of pastors local to the Ushiku detention centre as well as Amnesty International, a volunteer doctor, CTIC (Catholic Tokyo International Centre), Japan Convention Baptist pastor and NCCJ (National Christian Council Japan). Recently, they have been joined by ISSJ (International Social Services Japan). This group, meeting once a month, looks in detail at each of the cases and decide together on appropriate action. Meeting with those in detention and supporting their cases is the fundamental role of this group. Debbie gave me some idea of what detention means for those held through the case of a Sri Lankan family which the group have been working with.

The family who had been in Japan for ten years feared going back because of possible political reprisals that the father might face. Also, the two children had been born here. The whole family was detained, each separately. Even the two children were held separately. This detention lasted seven months until a temporary release was given to the mother and the children. With no right to work, they were dependent on charity. The father was kept for just under two years in all. Ushiku Menkai Network were able to visit and support the family and although a human rights lawyer fought the case and filed a petition, the family were eventually sent back to Sri Lanka.

One of the problems that the Network has is that they have no official way of finding out who is in detention so that they might be helped. In this situation it is so easy for people to slip through the net. A case which shows how easily this can happen is one which Debbie has been working on these past few months. Being in the right place at the right time, Debbie was approached by the caretaker of a building to ask if she would visit one of the apartments. Debbie found a woman who had just that day been given temporary release from Kanagawa Detention Centre in Yokohama. The woman who had been in Japan for 15 years working in the entertainment industry (a place where it is easy to work illegally without a visa) had been detained for seven months. Her five children had also been detained, each separately. While the mum was on the eighth floor, the 9 and 10 year old were together on another, the 7 year old on his own and the 2 and 1 year old together. When she was released she was told she would not yet get the 1 and 2 year olds back, because she was unable to feed them. Arriving back at her flat on her day of release, she found that everything in her flat had been stolen, even the children's clothes and toys. The woman felt that it had been another worker,



Debbie with sons Matt Deuel and Josh Rainiel

(Cont'd on next page, col.1)

Debbie Presses On... (Continued from p. 12)

the same one who had reported her in the first place who had come to the empty house to take what was there.

Calling on support from Yokohama Union Church and Second Harvest Japan, Debbie was able to get together clothes, futons and food for the family. With the possibility that she might be able to get a visa, the woman started looking for cleaning and babysitting jobs, so as not to be dependent on others. But the children were worried. They had missed a lot of school and were worried that they might be expelled. On the contrary, the school principal and the teachers, when they found out what had happened, were incredibly supportive. The children got back to school and started to live normal lives again. However this year in February the family were told that they would be deported. The Immigration department would send them to Manila, but no further. Since this woman's home was in the countryside, she needed to find some way of getting her family home. Again through support of Church groups, Filipino groups and the children's school, money was raised to send the family home. What was amazing to Debbie and to the woman herself was the amount of care people were capable of when they could see what was going on. The problem is that the ignorance of the situation, does not allow space for kindness. Debbie found herself just being given envelopes of money, no questions asked, just the desire to help. Thinking back at how Debbie found this woman, what would have happened to this family had these support networks not been there? How would they have survived if at all?

I asked her about how she had become a missionary. 'I lived in the Church, it was my home,' she says laughing. Her father was a lay preacher and all of her family was in-

volved with the church in some way or another. Although becoming a missionary would seem a natural thing to do, it was not until an officer in one of the national groups suggested it that she considered it. After studying in America, Japan became her first destination. Would she stay here? She seems to be in two minds. Japan suits her well and home is a short flight away. She enjoys her life and is able to balance her work with raising her young family. She is lucky to have a husband Ronald, also from the Philippines, who is working part-time and taking a lot of the responsibility for the two children, Matt (4) and Josh (22 months). Both boys attend the Yokohama Union Church International preschool where Ronald also helps out. (Ronald is also the lay-out editor for JCAN and for the Kyodan English newsletter.) The family attends two churches: Yokohama Union Church and a Kyodan church, Yoyogi Uehara Church, in Tokyo.

What was the hardest part of being in Japan? Her main gripe seems to be the language. Although she can communicate in Japanese, she feels it is never enough. But she is studying and hopes to continue to improve with time.

Her hopes are to work for justice for the Filipinos living in Japan but she also is concerned about the situation of justice issues in the Philippines. Having worked with a church related Women's NGO years ago in the NCR (National Capital Region and Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) provinces, she is well aware of the atrocities committed against church workers these days back home.

But her faith and cheery personality as well as her supportive family keep her going. She hopes for change and envisions a better world. (A.G.)

JCAN Welcomes New Volunteer: Alison Gray



Alison was raised as a Roman Catholic in Glasgow, Scotland. Two generations ago her family came to Scotland as Irish immigrants so her background is Irish. She has a Masters degree in Religious Studies from the University of Lancaster in England. Alison came

to Japan in 1999 and is co-ordinating the Feminist Theology Circle (founded in February 2005) which meets every month to network and discuss a book on feminist theology. She attends services at West Tokyo Union Church where JCAN editor Rev. Claudia Genung-Yamamoto is a pastor, and mass at Kichijoji Catholic Church in Kichijoji, Tokyo. Alison is interested in women's spirituality, mediation and yoga. She has a lively five year old son named Norifumi. Alison is co-editor for this issue of JCAN.

The Feminist Theology Circle meets at Kichijoji Catholic Church on the third Saturday from 1-3 p.m. The purpose of the group is to create a space for non-Japanese speakers to engage in feminist theology, and for Japanese speakers to have a chance to speak about feminist theology in English. Group members are from all Christian traditions and many nationalities. Alison and Claudia are among the group of founders for FTC. Email Alison at kireigurei@yahoo.co.uk if you want to learn more about FTC.

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CCA's 50th Anniversary

Fifty Years of Life Together

(This article reprinted from CCA website with permission)

See: <http://www.cca.org.hk/ccanews/1news.htm>

The Christian Conference of Asia celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on March 3-8. Returning to the site of the original meeting that conceived the idea of a regional ecumenical organisation in 1957, 120 overseas and 100 local participants gathered in Parapat on the shores of beautiful Lake Toba in North Sumatera, Indonesia. They took part in worship services, panel discussions, storytelling sessions and even tree planting.

The celebrations began with worship in over fifty churches in Parapat and Samosir Island, symbolising that CCA is rooted in the local church. Many of the participants preached and all enjoyed the music, fellowship and food shared by the local congregations. There were also many Bible studies and opportunities for worship during the celebrations.

The celebrations brought together Asian Christian leaders from all walks of life to make an assessment of the ecumenical movement in Asia. They gained a greater understanding of the vision and spiritual depths of the pioneers of the movement who ventured into an unknown future to form the East Asia Christian Conference in 1957 (later renamed the Christian Conference of Asia).

To achieve this, the participants listened to four in-depth panel discussions on CCA's fifty-year journey: 'Revisiting the Past', 'Strengthening Leadership', 'Present and Future' and 'Missiological and Ecumenical Challenges'.

A highlight of the celebration was the storytelling session led by Ron O'Grady, who introduced previous leaders and friends who reminisced about their time and involvement with CCA over the last half century. Interestingly two people who were at the original meeting in Parapat in 1957 were present in 2007: Kyaw Than, a former general secretary, and Rev. Dr Soritua A.E. Nababan, now a president of the World Council of Churches.

An overwhelming feature of the celebrations was the involvement of the churches of North Sumatera. A local organising committee raised a significant amount of money to make these celebrations something that no-one will ever forget. Wherever the participants went in North Sumatera, colourful banners over streets and on churches proclaimed the jubilee.

A spiritual revival service was held in Pematang Siantar, where a large gathering took place in 1957 in the presence of President Sukarno. Before this, the participants were



Parapat, North Sumatera, Indonesia, the site of the meeting that conceived the Christian Conference of Asia and the venue for CCA's jubilee celebrations fifty years later

transported in style in 350 becak (small rickshaw-like vehicles based on old motorcycles).

The celebrations culminated in a huge worship in the Teladan Stadium in Medan, the capital of North Sumatera, attended by 150,000 people, in the presence of the Minister of Religious Affairs, representing the president.

One morning, the participants were raised from their beds before dawn to plant trees on a hillside near Parapat. This act symbolised CCA's concern for the degradation and depletion of scarce natural resources around the world. The government of North Sumatera has decided that henceforth this hill will be called 'Lake Toba Asian Mission Hill'. Each year on World Environment Day a service will be held on this site.

The celebrations were not just about the past, they were also a time to look to the future and identify new opportunities and challenges to equip the churches to venture in to mission and models for ministries unique and decisive to the Asian context.

The general secretary of CCA, Dr Prawate Khid-arn said, 'The need of the hour is to pool all our resources together in order to transform this continent and the world to become humane, just and compassionate.'

(The Christian Conference of Asia is a regional ecumenical organization representing 16 National Councils and over 100 churches/denominations in Aotearoa-New Zealand, Australia, Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, East Timor, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand.)



CCA's 50th Celebration Opening Worship Sermon

From March 3-8, 2007 in Parapat, Indonesia, the Christian Conference of Asia held their 50th Anniversary Celebration. Dr. Satoko Yamaguchi, co-director of the Center for Feminist Theology & Ministry in Japan, gave this sermon for the opening worship.

Acts 9:36-43

Good afternoon. How wonderful it is for all of us to come together in Parapat, where the first Christian Conference of Asia was held in 1957, and where the place name in its language means to "come together"! It is my privilege to offer a message at this special worship of the 50th anniversary celebration of CCA. With all the attendants here, I would first like to express our appreciation for all the preparatory works done. Thank you!

As I am a Japanese woman, at the outset I would also like to mention that I am keenly aware of countless grave injustices that Japan has committed to Asian and Pacific-islands people, not only in the past but also still at present in many ways. As one of the people working against Japanese injustices, I feel both anger and shame. Please understand that there are concerned people, women and men, not only Christians but also those on other spiritual paths, who have been, and are, in a variety of ways, struggling in solidarity against oppressive and invasive political as well as economic powers.¹

I am glad that we, 350 delegates, gather here from more than 20 countries each of which has its own problems. Regardless of all kinds of difficulties and barriers, we are here to celebrate 50 years of our ecumenical journey together. The CCA has served within the global village community as a voice for social justice, peace, and the fullness of life, particularly in the context of Asia. We are here also to engage in critical reflections on the past to draw insights and spiritual strength together at this determining moment of global wellness in the 21st century.

For today's opening service, I invite you to pay attention to the disciple Tabitha. By focusing on Tabitha's story, written in Acts chapter nine, I wish to illuminate how important it is to pay careful attention to marginalized persons, and how through such an act, we will be inspired and blessed with new insights. I hope this reading of Tabitha's story will also offer a lot of suggestions for our ministries in Asia where Christianity is a religion of the minority.

According to the biblical text, the disciple Tabitha in Joppa was well-known for her good works and charity, but she became ill, and died. However, she was raised to life again, and this news

was spread throughout Joppa, resulting in many people believing in God.

In the text she is introduced clearly as a disciple, but very little attention has been paid to this. Alternatively, it could be said that she has been trivialized and virtually ignored to such an extent that it has become common knowledge that there were no female disciples of Jesus. Recently, feminist and postcolonial scholars have paid much careful attention to stories and histories of marginalized women as well as enslaved and colonized people, based upon their life-experiences of marginalization and trivialization. Biblical scholarship from these new perspectives, working in combination with various scholarships such as archeology, social science, linguistics, etc., has brought us a much deeper understanding of women and other neglected people in the bible.

I believe that here lies the importance of the integration of our life-experiences and theological endeavors. So, let us look at some of the aspects we are now learning about through Tabitha's story.²

Now, I said that she is introduced as a disciple in the text. Was she the only female disciple? The feminine form of the Greek word for disciple (*mathetria*) occurs only in this text in the Christian Testament (New Testament).³ However, we notice that the Greek phrasing here means "a certain (tis) disciple" without a definite article "the (he)." This indicates that she was not the only female disciple, but that there were more female disciples in Joppa. That the Greek phrasing is so straightforward and unremarkable also suggests that the existence of female disciples was not unique in Joppa, but was something people would recognize as a matter of fact. Thus Tabitha stands as a woman whose story testifies to the body of female disciples who have been lost from our historical memories for centuries.

Her story tells us more. Tabitha lived in Joppa, a Mediterranean port city in Judea about 50km both from Jerusalem and Caesarea. Joppa had been a predominantly Jewish city since the Maccabean revolt in the 2nd century BCE (1Mac12:33; 13:11). It was also a center of the Jewish Revolt in 66 CE. At that revolt, more than 8000 people, both women and men, were massacred, the city was utterly destroyed and burnt to the ground by Roman forces. However, even after this, Joppa became a refuge for Jews

1 In Japan where Christians comprise only 1% of the whole population, there is no effective way to undertake urgent social issues without interfaith and multi-movement solidarity. Here I see a wider ecumenism is not an either/or priority issue, but a must in this broken world.

2 See for more details: eg. Ivoni Richter Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); Lucinda A. Brown, "Tabitha" in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Carol Meyers, Toni Craven, and Ross S. Kraemer eds., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000, pp. 159-160); Satoko Yamaguchi, *Mary & Martha: Women in the World of Jesus* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002); Eugene Wipf and Stock, 2007).

3 I join the people who replace the terms "Old Testament" and "New Testament" with "Hebrew Bible" and "Christian Testament" in order to avoid the Christian-centric naming of these books.

who had escaped from neighboring cities. Joppa's being a port city under Roman imperial colonial rule suggests that there were all kinds of port workers who were despised and downtrodden in dirty, dangerous, and degrading labors. Many of them were migrants for a variety of reasons. The Jewish woman Tabitha lived in such a city.

She is introduced both by her Aramaic name Tabitha and her Greek name Dorcas, meaning "gazelle" or "deer." What kind of person do you imagine by this name? A young slim woman who runs around lightly and swiftly with the breeze behind her? As she was a disciple of Jesus, and the story is set in the years between 30 and 40, Tabitha in the story is no longer young. Since the average life span in first century Palestine was 30 years, she might well be an old woman. Did she still have the appearance of a swiftly running gazelle? We don't know.

However, the name Tabitha had very different connotations for first century people of that area. It was a very common name for slaves, both female and male slaves. So, Tabitha probably was a slave woman, who later became a freed-slave, earning a humble living by her work with textiles. The upper room scene where the dead Tabitha was laid out and mourned by the widows there suggests that she belonged to a widows' community. The term widow had an inclusive meaning around the time, designating any woman who lacked male protection. A widow could be a woman whose husband had died, a divorced woman, or an unmarried single woman without her father's protection. There were communities where a group of such women lived together, supporting each other in their harsh environments.

Some of such communities of widows were active in ekklesial (church) ministry and became a historical formative prototype for the orders of widows within the early church, and also possibly a prototype for later monasteries. The disciple Tabitha, who would have learned much about Jewish law, Torah, as well as the basileia (God's reign) and the good news, seems to have been living in such a widows' community. Most probably she continued re-telling and spreading the good news she had experienced during the time Jesus of Nazareth was with her and the other disciples.

According to the biblical text, she was well-known for her "good works and charity." The original Greek term for "good works" is "erga agatha" that literally means "good works", and denotes good works in general which people perceived as a sign of God's mercy and love. This could mean something she did with whatever she had. That is, if she helped poor people with her handmade tunics and other garments, and if poor people could experience God's grace and love through it, the work she did is identified as a "good work."

Here we see that Tabitha's discipleship was not separated between the spiritual and the social and economical. Her good news was brought forth not only to people's heart and mind but

also to people's bodily wellbeing. This aspect is emphasized by the second term that further describes her ministry.

The second term which describes a lot of work Tabitha did is "charity." Its original Greek word "eleēmosnē" has the same roots as "eleos" (mercy), which is used as the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "hesed." The word "hesed" (mercy) was understood to be an attitude that arose out of mutual relationships.⁴ Thus, the word "eleemosne" signifies "works of mercy" based on mutual trusting relationships.

Furthermore, it is important to notice that the word "eleēmosnē" is also used as the Greek translation of the Hebrew words "tsedek(m)" and "tsedahkah(f)" which mean God's justice, righteousness, or justice-based compassion.⁵ So, the word conveys the understanding that God is merciful and compassionate, and is on the side of the oppressed and suffering, does justice for them, does good things for them. This indicates that the work of "mercy" was perceived as inseparable from the work of "justice/righteousness." "Eleēmosnē" was understood in this sense by Jewish people around the time.

Therefore, the biblical text tells us that the disciple Tabitha's ministry was a compassionate justice-making ministry, creating and sustaining mutual trusting relationships. In other words, the disciple Tabitha was responding to the God who says, "I have seen the affliction of my people ... heard their cry ... know their sufferings," and her discipleship made God's presence real among people in their daily life situations.

Some of you might wonder how a poor old widow like Tabitha could have engaged in a justice-making ministry in a patriarchal society. This question makes me recall Jesus' parable of a widow and a judge (Lk. 18:1-8). This parable tells of the widow's determined justice-seeking attitude in her struggle against the injustice done to her made even the unrighteous judge vindicate her. I understand that the widow Tabitha and the women in her community worked with their variety of resources and wisdom earned from their life-experiences in solidarity with the downtrodden.

That she was known not only by her Aramaic name but also by her Greek name seems to testify that her works of justice were not confined to Jewish people, but were open to anyone in her wider community in Joppa. She brought hope for those who felt alone, alienated, and helpless, and brought people life through her works of justice. Here we learn that Tabitha's works of solidarity and hospitality were extended beyond social, cultural, and religious boundaries. From her life-experiences she knew that God's concern is not confined to Jewish people or Christians, but transcends all human boundaries. She had a "discerning heart" that all the children of God are invited to participate in transforming God's broken creation toward the integrity of whole creation, the integrity of each life.⁶

4 The word "hesed" is also translated as "dikaiousnē" (justice/righteousness). Eg. Gen.20:13; 21:23; 24:27; 32:10; Ex.15:13; 34:7.

5 The word "eleēmosnē" also translates "justice." Eg. Isa. 1:27; 28:17; 59:16; Pss.23:5; 32:5; 34:24; 102:6; Deut.6:24-25; 24:13, etc.

6 Regarding "discerning heart," see Archie Lee's speech quoted in "Sharing Our Hope for Peace: CATSV held in Hong Kong" by Hope S. Antone (CCA News 41/3, 2006, p.6).

According to the text, widows who were there brought Peter tunics and cloaks which Tabitha had made. These things probably reminded Peter of her life-time ministry that had brought people life, by making God's justice a reality for so many down-trodden people in the midst of the injustice done to them in the port city of Joppa. Peter immediately understood the deep sense of loss felt by the mourners, and by the broader community in which Tabitha lived. He asked people to leave him alone with Tabitha, and after a prayer, he asked Tabitha to rise up. And she rose! Tabitha was raised to life again into her community.

Now, how was her raising perceived by the people of the time? It must have been a sign that reassured them in their hope for the resurrection on the last day when God's justice will be fully realized. It was also a sign of God's resounding yes for Tabitha's life of justice-making ministry in mutual trusting relationships. The text thus concludes that many people in Joppa were brought to faith through her news.

Long before Luke the author of Acts wrote down this story, it must have been told and retold among local people, because it was an oral world where most people did not read and write but communicated everything through storytelling. The story must have encouraged many people to follow Tabitha, to engage in the deeds that enabled people to experience God's justice in the midst of their lives of unjust suffering. Furthermore we may imagine

that because of such justice-making works by Jewish people like Tabitha, people from various backgrounds had their hopes sustained, and newly emerging Christianity gradually spread wider within the multi-religious, multi-ethnic contexts of the Roman colonial world.

Unfortunately Tabitha's own messages did not survive in our Christian memories.⁷ If Tabitha were with us today, what kind of ministries would she encourage us to engage in in our local contexts, in Asian contexts, and in global contexts? May I suggest that we are invited to meditate on this challenge by the God who brought Tabitha back to life again to her community.⁸



⁷ This is one of the results of women's trivialization and marginalization in subsequent Christian history. I believe it is mandatory to retrieve women's stories and the histories of those who are valued least in society, both in the past and in the present. In this vein, I would like to refer to the issue of women's invisibility which is still being perpetuated even in this CCA conference. During this conference the importance of women's participation was repeatedly referred to by male participants. However, this was done in ways that set all women apart from men into the one category "women." One example of this is the phrase "bishops, theologians, church leaders, ... and women". This subtly assumes that "bishops, theologians, church leaders" are all male and then there is the separate category "women" who have no distinguishing markers, excluding them, therefore from 'bishops', 'theologians', and 'church leaders'. If we are to transform the church as well as the society to become more inclusive and egalitarian, we need to more consciously use expressions that will not make certain people invisible or marginalized.

⁸ I would like to express my appreciation to my friends Alison Gray in Tokyo and Elaine Wainwright in New Zealand who edited this paper.



*I am the vine
you are the branches*



Statement Protesting Prime Minister Abe's Comments on the "Comfort Women"

March 2007

Since 1992 the Women's Committee of the National Christian Council Japan, along with other women groups in Japan and other victimized countries, has continued to look for a solution to the "Comfort Women" (women forced to serve as prostitutes for the Imperial Japanese Army during WWII issue. During this time we have had many opportunities to meet with these victims and have become convinced that their testimony is true. We, therefore, support their appeal for redress, an official apology and legal compensation by the Japanese government.

However, the attitude of the current government is completely against what we and the victims are seeking. In August of 1993, after the government researched wartime records, the then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono issued a public statement of remorse and apology for the government's involvement in the recruitment, transportation and incarceration of these comfort women. We welcomed this statement and believed that this was the first step in seeking a solution to this issue.

In order to solve this problem, in 1995 the government established the Women's Asian Fund foundation to compensate victims from South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines by distributing donations made by individuals. Recognizing that this was not compensation directly from the Japanese government to take responsibility, victims rejected this solution. Those at the foundation recognize that many have rejected this compensation and that it has caused confusion among groups in those countries. The current government's position that compensation has already been made is not correct.

There have been ten lawsuits by victims brought against the Japanese government seeking compensation and an official apology. However, eight cases have been rejected by the Supreme Court on the grounds that the statute of limitations has passed and that there were no laws at the time regarding this issue at the time and thus the state is not accountable. Yet, in most cases the court did recognize the facts presented by the plaintiffs. In some cases, the court said the government had a responsibility to establish a law to compensate victims as soon as possible.

After the Kono statement was released, many victims' and ex-soldiers' testimonies along with newly discovered documents by researchers confirm the fact that the government was involved with the establishment of the comfort

women system. It was not possible for this system to exist without the aid of the Japanese military and government.

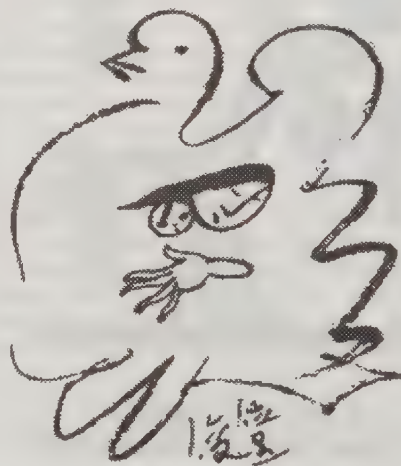
Currently, there are members of the Liberal Democratic Party close to Prime Minister Abe who are calling to withdraw or reexamine the Kono statement. Even though Prime Minister Abe said he would respect the Kono statement when became prime minister, he has begun to listen to these calls and now says it is possible to review that statement. We think this is a double standard and ambiguous.

We believe that the present Japanese government should take positive steps in respect to the Kono Statement which declared "the firm determination never to repeat the same mistake" and to make an official apology with the legal compensation while the survivors are alive. We believe that it is the only way for us to regain the international confidence of Japan.

Junko Matsuura (Ms)
Chairperson of the National Christian Council of Japan Women's Committee

Toshimasa Yamamoto (Rev.)
General Secretary of the National Christian Council of Japan

For anyone who feels compelled to email or write PM Abe regarding the "comfort women" issue, here is his address.
2-3-1 Nagata-cho
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo
100-0014 Japan
E-mail <http://www.kantei.go.jp>



Prayers of Concern from Korea



Urgent Prayer Appeal to Ecumenical Community for Korean Hostages in Afghanistan

July 31, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) has consistently prayed for (I;É(Bpeace and life(I;É(B in the global village.

We, together with the whole Korean people, are in deep sorrow and pain after we heard today the shocking news that the Taliban have killed a second Korean hostage, Mr. Shim Sung-Min, early this morning. This terrible news came to us only a few days after Rev. Bae Hyung-Kyu was killed by the Taliban last Wednesday. Moreover, the threat of further executions of the hostages is driving not only the affected families but the whole Korean society into the most painful situation.

Therefore, we urgently call on the entire ecumenical community around the world to pray to God that the killings of innocent people may stop and that these hostages may safely return to their families. We deeply appreciate the earlier

expression of prayer sent from the World Council of Churches to the National Council of Churches in Korea.

We urge the global community to work for true peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. Particularly, we sincerely request the governments of both Afghanistan and the US to lead the negotiations with the Taliban for the sake of the safe return of the hostages.

We express our deep condolences to the families of Rev. Bae Hyung-Kyu and Mr. Shim Sung-Min and stand in firm solidarity with all the affected families.

Let us all continue to pray for all people whose lives are threatened by conflict situations and to make our utmost effort to work for abundant life for all people.

Sincerely,

Rev. Yoon Kil Soo
General Secretary
The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK)

Common Prayer of the North and South for Peace and Unification

God of righteousness and peace,

We thank you for having listened to our nation's mourning in pain under the Japanese occupation, and for opening the door of unification and peace on the Korean peninsula 62 years ago.

We thank you for calling the churches in the North and the South to be disciples of Christ and to gather together to pray in one voice for peace and unification on this Liberation Memorial Day.

God of love and unification,

We pray that you lead us to do our best to create a new history of unification beyond division, and lead our people to help each other to move beyond the suffering of war and to achieve common prosperity.

We pray that you give us a new sign of reconciliation and cooperation on the Korean peninsula to which you call us, which will contribute to peace in North-East Asia and all the world.

God who gives us strength and wisdom,

You showed us that peace is to be achieved through humili-

ation and service just as Jesus came to us in a humble manner, in communion with sinners and washing the feet of the disciples.

You taught us, through your death on the cross offering a sacrifice for atonement, that unification and unity is to be fulfilled through self-sacrifice.

We will follow your teachings through our oneness in prayer as churches in the North and the South.

We will do our utmost to be a church proclaiming national unification and peace as well as practicing it with mildness and humility, not with threats, with justice and love, not with force, with patience and devotion, not with oppression.

God, we pray that you fill us with strength and wisdom. Believing that you call us to be workers for our nation's unification and peace, that you call us to work today and continuously, and that you guide us to open a new history of our nation's unification and peace, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

New Staff at NCCJ are Full of Hope

Interview by Alison and Claudia with Takako and Naomi on May 22nd at the NCCJ Office

We met Takako Watanabe and Naomi Tomita in the meeting room at NCCJ. The minute we got there, they had gathered their papers and were sitting ready for us. It had taken a fair old bit of planning to get together; these were clearly women with schedules!

And that is not surprising. Tomita-san is working both as the Peace and as the Nuclear Issues Committee, while Watanabe-san is in charge of the Article 9 Committee. It is the season for them to be busy and they seemed to relish it.

For Tomita-san her work now is a continuation of her work before. Before taking this part-time post in January, she had been working as one of the members of the Peace Committee. Her denomination is Baptist Convention and she attends the Yokosuka Nagasawa Church. Watanabe-san, had no previous connection with NCCJ. She is Catholic, attending St. Ignatius in Yotsuya. She too started working as part-time staff for NCCJ in January.

We first asked about their duties. They both work with the Christian Peace Network, a network of both Catholic and Protestant groups and churches who are concerned to support peace making in Japan. As well as this ecumenical group, Tomita-san also works with the Interfaith Peace Network. This group comprises mainly of Buddhists and Christians, though she stresses that it is open to any faith group. Together they have been working through demonstrations and petitions protesting against the current government plans to change the work of the 'self defence force' and Article 9. On a recent march in Tokyo, protesting against changing Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, Tomita-san had a hand in organising the children's parade. In this, the children marched, drumming for peace. Another interfaith activity is 'Caroling For Peace' where you can hear carols and taiko, sometimes at the same time. This takes place in Ginza.

As head of the Nuclear Issues Committee, Tomita-san's recent work has been protesting against nuclear energy plants in Japan. To my surprise, there are 17 nuclear power plants and 51 nuclear reactors in Japan. Naomi is shocked that a country which has suffered two atomic attacks, and which still has surviving victims of those attacks, should have nuclear power plants on its soil. Along with Christian groups, other faith groups and concerned citizens, she was part of a walk demonstrating against the plants.

The nuclear issue is also one that worries Japan's neighbours. Another part of her work is in working to create better relations with China and Korea. The action against



Left, Naomi Tomita — staff for NCCJ Article 9 Committee; right, Takiko Watanabe — part-time staff for Peace and Nuclear Issues

the use of the self defence force and against changing Article 9 is one aspect of this. Another is her work to arrange a Children's Peace Conference. This is a new initiative which started in summer 2005 when children from Korea met with Japanese children in Hiroshima. This year they will travel to Korea, taking 20 children including Japanese of Korean descent (zainichi), for this summer's conference.

Of course, there is a lot of overlap with the duties of her colleague Takako Watanabe. Watanabe-san's main job is to work against proposed changes to Article 9. Her strategy in this is to use networking and demonstrations to build and keep the momentum of protest going. In doing this, she organizes the Christian Peace Network, which now has over 1,000 supporting members. Watanabe-san sends out three to six emails a day, informing of protests and events, as well as writing the Japanese Newsletter for the Christian Peace Network.

She is full of hope about the work she is doing and recent success spurs her on. She mentions the protests that occurred due to the new history textbooks in Japanese schools. They were protesting that these texts gave a distorted view of Japanese history during the Second World War. However, although the government pushed through the bills, the publicity generated by groups such as the Christian Peace Network meant that only a few areas agreed to use them. For her this consciousness raising and work for peace is exactly what she wants to do. She happily tells us that there were 7,000 people on the last march against changing Article 9. She is unhappy about the current Prime Minister and his policies, but says with happy determination, 'Christians will not give up.'

(Cont'd on opposite page, col. 1)

Visit of Christian Delegation from China

by Emi Beland
Secretary to General Secretary
Manager of Foreign Affairs
Japan Bible Society

NCC-J's China Committee reciprocated their visit to China in 2004 by welcoming a delegation of 10 members of the TSPM and CCC from April 19th to 26th. The first visit of TSPM/CCC was realized in 1984 and this is their 3rd visit to the country.

Their 8-day stay consisted of visits to Christian institutions/organizations such as kindergarten, seminaries, universities, Braille library, hospital, museum, rehabilitation center for the homeless, etc. (see list below).

At various locations during the visit, the delegation shared about Christianity in China and about their work, not only in churches but in social settings also. It was a great opportunity for the Japanese Christians to learn about the situation in China, as well as for the Chinese delegation to discover the wide range of activities and ministries the Japanese churches are involved in.

NCC-J and TSPM/CCC have been building relationships since the early 80's, right after the reopening of churches in China. Most of the members of the delegation



Chinese Christian Council delegation in Japan, April 19 - April 26. Photo by Toshiro YAMANA

this time were from the post-Cultural Revolution period. It was encouraging to hear first-hand from young Christian leaders, to see their wonderful works and to be reassured of the lasting ties between Chinese and Japanese Christians. We sincerely pray and expect that this trust relationship will bear abundant fruit for the glory of God.

Kanto Area

NCC-J office

Japan Baptist Convention Mejirogaoka Kindergarten

Japan Lutheran College / Japan Lutheran Seminary

Nikko Shinko Anglican Episcopal Church

Asian Rural Institute

Japan Evangelical Lutheran Kamata Church

Shiki Seibo Anglican Episcopal Church

United Church of Christ in Japan Shitaya Church

Japan Baptist Convention Tokiwadai Church

Korean Christian Church in Japan Tokyo Church

Japan Braille Library

Meiji Gakuin University

St. Luke's Hospital

Kyobunkwan

Japan Bible Society

Kansai Area

Franciscan Christian Museum

NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions

Doshisha University

Kamagasaki Diakonia Center Kibo-no-ie

Kwansei Gakuin University

Korean Christian Center

(JCAN editors note: Emi Beland traveled with the Chinese delegation while they were in Japan.)

New Staff... (Continued from p. 20)

When I ask them what they like and dislike about their jobs, they reply that the best thing is when they make a connection with someone. Watanabe-san spoke about how being contacted on the phone by someone who had found the group, or from someone needing information, made her day. For both of them, there was sadness that for others in their Christian communities, the connection between Peace work and their faith wasn't clear. They spoke of feeling alone. The second 'worst thing about the job' was that there was not enough time to do all they had to do!

Our 45 minutes went very quickly. We gathered up our papers and went off. No hanging around in this office! (AG)



Filipino Migrant Women's Book on Empowerment

KALAKASAN, a center for migrant women and staffed by Japanese and Filipina volunteers, Catholic Sisters and ex-DV women and volunteers has a program called "Feminist Participatory Action Research" (FPAR). In FPAR, migrant women gather together to share their own experiences and through analyzing their communal experiences, are better able to understand the structural roots of subjugation and oppression, and focus on working towards changing that situation.

Kalakasan (which means "strength" in Tagalog) began FPAR in 2003 with 5 migrant women who were survivors of domestic violence. One of Kalakasan's staff members met with the women as they reflected and moved into action. She recorded the group's movement towards "Empowerment." The documentation of this empowerment process was recently published in a book form.

The book covers stories of each of the 5 Filipino women, her marriage to a Japanese husband, her DV experiences, her feelings of despair, and her meeting a supportive organization. In that process the women went beyond their experiences of individual realities to becoming aware that their problems were rooted in society's flawed systemic structure that is patriarchal and racist. Sharing their own process of empowerment that stopped the cycle of violence, the women recognized anger as their source of empowerment. The women realized the importance of identifying, owning and expressing their anger as key to their empowerment.

The women realized that empowerment was not just an individual endeavor but is achieved through relationships. They need individuals or groups who could give them enough caring and respectful space to be themselves.

And finally the women came to the conclusion that the existing community needs to be revolutionized and restructured. They learned that women's resistance through anger is not enough to ensure empowerment. They saw that there needs to be an affirming, empowering community where all can be healed; an empowering community of both women and men, with compassion, attempting to transform relationships from being racist or patriarchal to ones that truly enhance life for all.

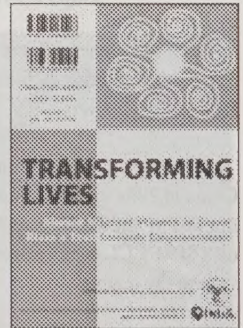
In addition to relating the concrete experiences of these 5 DV survivors, this book describes through many incidents how important supportive people and groups are in the empowerment process. And finally, to further promote the empowerment of migrant women, there are insertions of mi-

grant women's appeal for a change in the legal system that is necessary for real empowerment. Kalakasan's hope is that many migrant women survivors and their supporters will read this book obtainable through Kalakasan's office. They await your orders. Write, fax, or email them at:

KALAKASAN

37 KKF Haimu #210, 1-34-8 Kita-kase
Saiwaiku, Kawasaki-shi 212-0057
Phone: (044-580-4675; fax 044-580 4676
Email: kalakasan@inada-noborito.com

(Editor's Note: This article is adapted and edited from the Kalakasan English newsletter)



What's Wrong with Yasukuni Shrine? Questions and Answers

The NCCJ Yasukuni Committee has published a quadro-lingual edition of a booklet called: *"What's Wrong with the State Honoring Those Who Died in a War - Q and A on the Proposed National Memorial. Countries in Asia"* have leveled strong criticism toward Japan's Prime Minister and others for making official visits to Yasukuni Shrine where convicted war criminals are deified. Yasukuni Shrine is a symbol of militarism and glorifies all the invasions and atrocities committed by Japan during the war. The war museum on the grounds of Yasukuni Shrine has rewritten history to deny the existence of the "comfort women" and also the invasion of China.

As Japan continues to become more and more militaristic, the official state visits align Yasukuni Shrine with national interests. Many Christians and non-Christians oppose the shrine and of courses many voices of opposition come from China and Korea. The booklets are written in Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and English and cost 500 yen each. Write to the:

National Christian Council in Japan
Yasukuni Committee
2-3-18-24 Nishi-waseda, Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo 169-0051 JAPAN
More information and a photo of the booklets are on the NCCJ Japanese website: <http://ncc-j.org>

Dr. Carol Meyers at Tomisaka Center

On July 3rd, at the Tomisaka Christian Center and the Tokyo Feminist Theology Circle hosted a lecture on "The Problem of Patriarchy: Social Science Analysis and the Roles of Israelite Women" with Professor Carol L. Meyers. Dr. Meyers is from Duke University, Durham North Carolina, USA, distinguished scholar in the study of women in the biblical world and author of "Discovering Eve" and "Women in Scripture." She is Jewish and takes students on Seminars to Israel in the summer. For more information on Tomisaka Christian Center, see www.tomisaka.jp

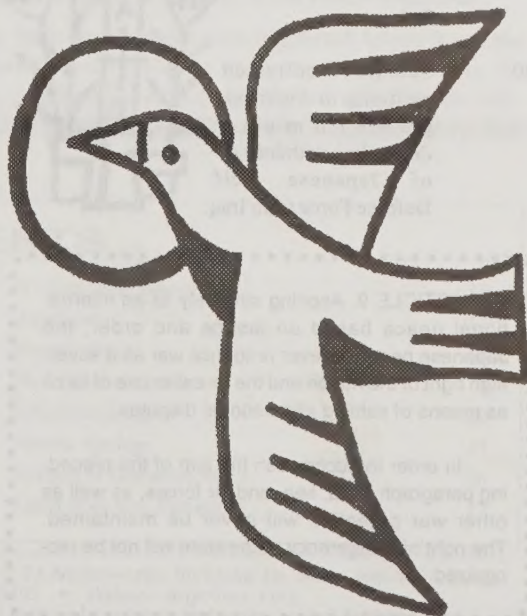


Participants at Tomisaka Christian Center with Dr. Meyers.

International Bible Forum 2007

Japan Bible Society held an International Bible Forum this year from June 27-28 at the Tokyo International Forum. Professor Marvin Meyer, who is an authority on "The Gospel of Judas" spoke on "Maria Magdalene and Judas Iscariot: The Rehabilitation of Two Marginalized Disciples in Early Christian Literature", Dr. Carol L. Meyers spoke on, "What the Bible Does, and Doesn't, Tell us about the Lives of Israelite Women". Other speakers were Dr. Richard Bauckham, Dr. Francois Bovon, and Dr. William L. Holladay

For more information go to Japan Bible Society website <http://www.bible.or.jp/e/forum2007/>



NCCJ Calendar Highlights 2007

February

- 2-4 Working Group Meeting on Peace and Reconciliation in North East Asia in Hong Kong
- 23 Submit collected petitions to Japanese government demanding withdrawal of Japanese Self Defense Force from Iraq.
- 26 General Assembly of Okinawa Council of Churches

March

- 2 World Day of Prayer Meeting in Tokyo
- 8 Study Meeting on Ecumenism for newly graduated seminary students organized by the Division of Christian Education of NCCJ
- 17 Charity Concert by Christian Coalition on Refugee and Migrant Workers

April

- 3 Submit collected petitions to Japanese government to oppose "Referendum Bill" to change the Japanese Peace Constitution
- 13-14 National Assembly of Christian Peace Network in Japan
- 19-26 Official Visit by China Christian Council Delegation
- 20 Submit collected petitions to Japanese government demanding withdrawal of Japanese Self Defense Force from Iraq.



ARTICLE 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

May

- 3 Japanese Constitution Day Peace Parade
- 7 Inter-faith Prayer Meeting on Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution in front of the Diet Building
- 11 100 Year Anniversary Worship Service and Symposium by Division of Christian Education of NCCJ
- 14-15 National Steering Committee Meeting of Christian Coalition on Alien Registration Law
- 28-29 Seminar on Death Penalty organized by Interfaith Network to stop Death Penalty
- 31 Submit collected petitions to Japanese government demanding withdrawal of Japanese Self Defense Force from Iraq.

June

- 8-10 Religious Leaders Conference on G8 Summit in Germany
- 18 Submitted collected petitions to Japanese government demanding withdrawal of Japanese Self Defense Force from Iraq.
- 20-23 2007 Six Party Conference for Peace and Security in North East Asia, Sangnam Conference House in Yonsei University (Rev. Toshi Yamamoto responded to three papers at the conference.)

July

- 27 Submitted collected petitions to Japanese government demanding withdrawal of Japanese Self Defense Force from Iraq.

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